



# Humanist Society of New Mexico



March 2012

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> [zelda@amadorbooks.com](mailto:zelda@amadorbooks.com)

## Quote of the Month

Healthy discontent is the prelude to progress.

Mohandas Gandhi

## HSNM Family Co-Op

### Alternative Children's Sunday School

Informal MeetUps: field trips, hikes, socials  
Call 505-292-4375 for more information  
or go to [www.MeetUp.com](http://www.MeetUp.com)

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### Santa Fe Humanists Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10:30am

*TBA*

Community Room, Main Branch of the  
Santa Fe Public Library, 145 Washington St.

For more information contact Bill Weihofen  
(505) 988-1343

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### Friendly Philosophers

Monday, March 5<sup>th</sup> - General Discussion

Monday, March 19<sup>th</sup>

*TBA*

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite  
Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room.  
Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

## Upcoming HSNM Meetings

Meetings are free and run from 10:00 to noon  
(except where noted)

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**Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup>**

### Informal Meeting

*General Discussion starts at 10:10am*  
Restricted to Members and their Guests Only. For  
invitation please contact Zelda Gatuskin at 505-  
344-6102 for details or questions.

Refreshments: Richard Grady

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

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**Saturday, March 17<sup>th</sup>**

### Topical Discussion – Open to the Public

*Laughing in the Face of Absurdity*  
Erna Fergusson Library, 3700 San Mateo Blvd. NE

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**Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup>**

### Speaker Meeting – Open to the Public

*Emerging Threats to Religious Liberty in New  
Mexico*

Peter Simonson

Humanist Minute: TBD

Refreshments: Tova Shifberg

UNM Law School, Room 2405, 1117 Stanford NE

**H**umanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience, and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

### **The Humanist Society of New Mexico**

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association.

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community.

#### **Officers/Committees**

*Zelda Gatuskin: President*

*Roy Moody: Vice President*

*[Education/Programs]*

*Fred March: Past President*

*[Special Projects]*

*Leland Franks: Treasurer*

*Jerry Gilbert: Secretary [By-laws, Membership]*

*Carolyn Kaye, Member-at-Large*

*Randall Wall, Member-at-Large*

#### **Ongoing Projects:**

*Ron Herman, HSNM Family Co-op Coordinator*

*Randall Wall, Newsletter Editor*

*Attila Csanyi, Friendly Philosopher's Director*

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$15 annually. HSNM membership is \$15/year (\$20 for two adults in the same household. Send subscription or membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall, paragon2012@comcast.net or 1009 Childers NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month. Website submissions may be sent to president@humanistsocietyofnm.org. HSNM dues are now paid separately from AHA dues, visit [www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org) for more information about the American Humanist Association.

### **President's Message for March**

It's still February as I write, and I have a Darwin Day gift for you. Below is a short excerpt from Harry Willson's philosophical memoir, *From Fear To Love: Journey Beyond Christianity*, which will be published this spring. It is the third volume in his humanist trilogy, and while this posthumous publication follows *Freedom From God: Restoring the Sense of Wonder*, and *Myth and Mortality: Testing the Stories*, the work of those two books really started with this one, with Harry's careful review of his roots, his life choices, and his personal evolution from missionary pastor to activist/humanist author. Harry was a frequent contributor to this Newsletter. He writes:

"Your eternal soul" is a phrase used by fundamentalist preachers to terrify the non-thoughtful with threats of eternal conscious torment. My mother used a similar phrase, with a grim twist. When we had upset her, and she was into her reactive rant -- which is marvelous to remember but was terrifying to experience while little -- she'd shriek, "You make me damn my eternal soul!" She had an eternal soul, and she was putting it in jeopardy, and it was all our fault! Well, from this perspective, fifty years later, I can flatly state that I don't believe any of that. I don't believe in eternal conscious torment of eternal souls in hell. I quit doing that, and said so, while I was still a clergyman. Christians objected to my view, even then, saying that if there wasn't any hell, heaven would be no fun. That's how mean they were, meaner than any self-respecting God would ever be.

I still don't know about eternal souls. Souls are what are reincarnated, according to that metaphor. Christian theology, which rejects reincarnation, is irrational at this point. "Eternal" means "not limited by time," "outside of time." Most popular usage means "everlasting," which is the old translation and not exactly the same thing. But everlasting goes in two directions. Looking forward into an everlasting future, one can try to imagine a future that never ends, that goes on and on, forever. The mean-hearted want to add conscious torment to that.

But what about looking backward? "Everlasting" would mean looking backward, back and back, farther and farther, on and on, back and back, with no end, that is, no beginning. Hindus do it. Then the two everlasting directions meet, way out there, and we get circles, huge

circles, cycles, very large and very long cycles. Hindus can do it, but Hebrew/Christians cannot. They plunk down a thing they call "creation" and stop the process, when looking backward. It is not everlasting, not eternal. It is only half-eternal. Now, that's illogical. Either something is eternal, or it isn't.

"God" is supposedly making eternal souls, either at creation or at conception. People who believe in creation don't believe in eternal souls at all, but half-eternal ones. You can tell I'm not believing it, not any of it, not even the notion that there is an Entity/Creator "God" at all. But I still have to figure out what I am, and what you are. Harry Willson, *From Fear To Love: Journey Beyond Christianity*

Humanists are wisely moving away from knee-jerk religion-bashing to seek common ground with people of faith. I think Harry considered himself a person of faith -- he had a faith in what he called the Cosmos, "The Whole Thing Doing What It Does." But he and others rightly point out that certain religious doctrines cause real harm. Recent spurious debates over contraception and climate change provide two examples. Those who cling stubbornly to ignorance, hypocrisy and misogyny must not be allowed to hinder the advance and application of science or interfere with our quest for a fair and just society. While Harry's logic seems unassailable, be prepared for staunch religionists to reject any application of logic, or fact, to their belief systems. At that point, we may simply state: That's why we keep church and state separate -- you can believe what you want, but you can't make it law on that basis alone.

### **Next Speaker Meeting Speaker Bio**

Since 2000, Peter Simonson has served as Executive Director for ACLU-NM. As primary spokesperson for the organization, Peter develops policy positions and addresses such diverse topics as national security, "zero tolerance" in public schools, racial profiling, immigrants rights, separation of church and state, and the protection of free speech rights. Under Peter's leadership, ACLU-NM membership has grown from 2,500 to over 4,500 members and the organization has expanded from 4 to 14 staff, including a new office dedicated to border rights in Las Cruces. The ACLU-NM's legal docket has grown from a dozen civil liberties cases a year to roughly 50.

Prior to joining the ACLU, Peter directed a project to improve immigrants' access to health care in Albuquerque. For five years he worked in sustainable development and ethnographic research in the

Dominican Republic and Costa Rica. Peter earned his Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the University of Michigan in 1994. He is a native of Albuquerque.

### **HSNM Membership List**

Our HSNM membership list is being distributed this month to our members-in-good-standing. Those who receive their Newsletter via e-mail only should request a copy from Zelda ([zelda@amadorbooks.com](mailto:zelda@amadorbooks.com)) and it will be sent to you by e-mail attachment.

### **Next HSNM Board Meeting**

The next meeting of the HSNM Governing Board will be held on March 24, following the Speaker Meeting, at the home of Carolyn Kaye. If you would like to attend, please contact Carolyn or Zelda.

### **Emerging Threats to Religious Liberty in New Mexico**

Never before has the ACLU seen such aggressive efforts in New Mexico to enlist local governments to endorse fundamentalist Christian beliefs. What strategies are national groups and local mega-churches using to wear down the separation between church and state and how does this trend threaten your freedom?

### **Rio Rancho Humanist Groups Launches!**

by Jerry Gilbert

The Humanist Society of New Mexico has created a branch meetup for members living in the Rio Rancho/Westside area. Our first discussion will be on Saturday, March 3 at 1pm, at 4611 Los Reyes Rd. The topic will be: "What does humanism mean to you? How do you think humanists can contribute to society?" Please contact Jerry Gilbert at [drjgilbert@aol.com](mailto:drjgilbert@aol.com) or 505-400-9649.

### **Breasts and Other Diseases**

by Ashley Jordan

Earlier this month, the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation decided to pull funding for breast examinations and breast cancer screenings offered by Planned Parenthood. After 3 days of public outrage, they reversed that decision. In just 3 days, the amount of phone calls, letters, monetary donations, and internet-ing (a vigilante hacker changed the banner on the Foundations website which had previously called women to join a run aimed at ridding the world of breast cancer to read instead "help us run over poor women on our way to the bank") was enough to make the Susan G. Komen Foundation flip on their previous decision.

In fact, Planned Parenthood received close to a million dollars of donations over those three days, which surpassed the amount they had received from the Susan G. Komen Foundation in the past. While most mainstream media news sites are arguing about the politics behind the decisions, I see something fairly simple. And it inspires me. I see several generations of women who, regardless of their own personal feelings about Planned Parenthood's other dealings, banded together to help women everywhere.

Because having breasts is something all women have to deal with, but having breast cancer is something no woman should ever have to face alone or without medical help.

More than that, it is in every woman's benefit for all women to have access to medical facilities and information about women's sexual health in its entirety. That is why it is so important that places like Planned Parenthood exist.

There were also 26 senators who took up the fight. They sent the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation a letter urging them to reverse the decision and in doing so stood up for women everywhere. Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico was one of those signatures, so if you're feeling in a letter writing mood today, you might send him a thank you note, and encourage him to do the same for women in the future.

### **Review: John Pilger's *The New Rulers of the World*, Part 1**

by Don Gutierrez

The pivotal thesis of John Pilger's *The New Rulers of the World* is that rich nations—especially the United States—dominate the world commercially through “overwhelming force.” The misleading association of “free trade” with “democracy” conceals a new imperialism. Early on in *Rulers*, Pilger amplifies this central idea by asserting that the “new rulers” are implementing “terrorism” as the new Red Scare, “justifying a permanent war footing and paranoia, and construction of the greatest military machine ever.” But, Pilger argues, the most dangerous and destructive terrorism in the modern world is, and for decades has been, state terrorism.

Vigorously dismissing the rhetoric of liberation and democracy dished out by the “new rulers,” he cites former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's “the price is worth it” (regarding the death of 500,000 Iraqi children resulting from Washington's sanctions policy against Iraq). In addition, Pilger instances U. S. General William Looney's declaration that “They know we own their country...we dictate the way they live and talk.”

Pilger also quotes George Kennan, a U. S. diplomat and respected authority on the Cold War, who, commenting on America's possessing fifty percent of the world's wealth but around six percent of its population, stated in the late 1940s: “Our real job is to maintain this position of disparity....we should cease thinking about human rights, the raising of living standards and democratisation”(120).

In Pilger's outlook, these sentiments describe globalization, which he elaborates throughout *Rulers* as the global assault against the poor. Financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank represent the priorities of Washington and Wall Street. They do so in part through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), “consisting of privatization, indebtedness and the destruction of public services,” resulting in the impoverishment and misery of most people in the world. “When tariffs and food and fuel subsidies are eliminated under an IMF diktat, Pilger continues, “small farmers and the landless know they have been declared expendable.”

That these conditions result in farmers in Mexico, India and elsewhere committing suicide apparently doesn't bother World Bank officials. These magnates fly into the capitols of developing nations on a Monday, make SAP deals in posh hotels and fly out Wednesday carrying briefcases stuffed with deals worth billions. Leaders of countries that don't cooperate with the “Washington Consensus,” whether it's Castro of Cuba, Allende of Chile, Saddam Hussein, or Sukarno of Indonesia, encounter American covert or overwhelming force. Thomas Friedman has put the arrangement with brutal succinctness: “The hidden hand in the market will never work without a hidden fist” (126), the “hand” being McDonald's, Silicon Valley, and the like, the “fist,” America's armed forces.

*Rulers* consists of an introduction and four substantial chapters. The first deals with the West's carving up of Indonesia, the second with the extreme inhumanity of the West's Gulf War I assault and sanctions on Iraq. Chapter three broadens the scope of the first two chapters, with the West's plan and efforts to dominate the world. Chapter four concerns the history of the racist genocide towards the Aborigines by the White government and settlers of Australia.

Indonesia is perhaps the most dramatic case in point of the West's imperial steel “fist” bashing the weaker nations in the world. In the chapter “The Model Pupil,” Pilger examines Indonesia as the West's exemplar of globalization. During a “regime change” that lasted 33 years, almost 70 million people in Indonesia lived in poverty. Women were sometimes forced to work in sweatshops for 36 hours straight. Pilger goes behind the

display window to expose the extraordinarily violent change that occurred in 1965 when the United States and England helped the troops of General Suharto usurp the presidency of Sukarno. This usurpation initiated a genocide targeting Indonesian Communists and “suspects” and resulted in the murder, with the crucial help of Washington’s telecommunication equipment and lists, of 500,000 to a million people.

According to a CIA report, “the massacres rank as one of the worst mass murders in the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (27). Sukarno was a popular leader but he didn’t cooperate with the West’s corporate interests. Equally shocking was the thunderous applause this genocidal “stabilization” evoked in the American media and among such statesmen as American Ambassador to Indonesia Marshall Green and famed journalists like James Reston who described this event in the *New York Times* as “a gleam of light in Asia.”

What followed this enormous Washington-backed massacre could also qualify as one of the most cold-blooded acts in modern history as super powers carved up Indonesia’s economy like a roast turkey. Financial experts from the West met Suharto’s people in Geneva a year following the bloodbath: “They divided up into five different sections: mining in one room, services in another, light industry in another, banking and finance in another; and what Chase Manhattan did was sit with a delegation and hammer out policies that were going to be acceptable to them and other investors. You had these big corporation people going around the table, saying this is what we need, this, this and this, and they basically designed the legal infrastructure for investment in Indonesia” (Pilger, 41).

Real control of the Indonesian economy (and, thus, government) fell into the hands of the United States, Europe, Japan and Canada. At the beginning of the twenty first century, Indonesia was indebted by over one-fourth of a trillion dollars, a debt that, as in other countries deliberately impoverished by the superpowers, will be paid for by the poor. Despite this involvement in genocide and gross economic exploitation, the United States and Canada continue training an Indonesian officer elite that is part of a military never punished for its 1965 mass murders.

This Indonesian saga of horror is just one of several found in *Rulers*. Pilger cites analogous cases of particularly American and British use of “overwhelming force” in Iraq War I, Kosovo and elsewhere, exhibiting the same merciless disregard for civilians and civilian infrastructure that Suharto’s troops exhibited in taking bank employees out of a bank during the “regime change” and beheading them.

A little light in this immense darkness is cast by the

## Case Studies in Global Environmental Policy Realities and Controversies - A Humanist Approach

**Instructor:** Frederic March, Environmental  
Policy & Planning Consultant  
Humanist Society of New Mexico

The United Nations leads the world’s governing bodies in developing environmental policies that address threats to the Earth’s atmosphere, waters, lands, plants, animals and people - threats that affect the ability of the Earth’s resources to meet civilization’s growing demands for water, food, fuel, fiber and vital minerals. The course presents highly visual case studies, including video clips that address these concerns. Students will discuss the goals and strategies of policies in response to issues raised in each case study. My purpose is to help citizens critically assess the controversial scientific and political issues in policymaking, and to separate fact from fiction in the media. What makes this a humanist approach? It’s the ways that I frame each issue around the human consequences of bad environmental policies.

COURSE SCHEDULE: Wednesday 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm; 4 Wednesday sessions starting March 7, 2012, ending March 28, 2012

CONTACTS: OSHER: 277-6179; INSTRUCTOR: 366-8721

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moral presence and anger of Pilger. In his follow-ups to these horrible events, he confronts various political personages with the kind of uncompromising questions one seldom witnesses in American journalists and interviewers. Pilger attempts to interview James Wolfensohn, then head of the World Bank, about Indonesia. Wolfensohn won’t see him so Pilger instead interviews a World Bank officer: “I asked him why, during thirty years, the World Bank had failed to say anything about a regime that was guilty of mass murder, in Indonesia and East Timor. ‘I think we got a number of things wrong,’ he replied ‘and we have to understand that’”(44)

In the chapter “Paying the Price,” an extended confrontation occurs between Pilger and James Rubin, assistant secretary of state under President Bill Clinton.

Pilger not only asks tough questions but rigorously disputes Rubin's deliberate State Department's obfuscation about whether Saddam or the United States was to blame for the high child mortality rate in Iraq during the sanctions period. The following exchange occurs: "He [Rubin] retorted, 'If you'd like to give a speech, we can switch chairs.'" [Pilger] "I don't think it becomes a senior State Department official to speak like that" [Rubin] "Let me hear your speech." [Pilger] "Why have you misrepresented the Unicef report?" Pilger, who apparently does his homework thoroughly, queries Rubin about Albright's brutal response to the dead Iraqi children issue. When Rubin claims Albright's statement was out of context, Pilger hands Rubin the context, Albright's interview transcript.

(to be continued next issue)

### **First Things First**

by Sylvia Ramos Cruz, 1/31/12

The first mention of woman  
in a thirty hour class  
comes at the twenty-third  
as if there would be a story  
without someone to give birth

### **Moments in Motion**

by Jean O'Hara, 3/6/97

"The beautiful moment makes a way,  
Ugly moment, do not endure or stay."  
So, spake the flower, as a benign bloom  
Waved in the wind and shook its petals, "Soon  
You will see my bared calyx left vacant  
To erase the bitter and the anxious pant  
Of pain," as the sepal motions to the  
Inner parts emerging, "They're not Blather."  
One doesn't have to wait for the whole score  
Of the entire musical symphony-  
Just a sonata unfolding, then more  
So one has a penny for thought - money.  
Yes, the Director motions the baton,  
Stamens, pistils, ovaries - stems are gone.

### **Letter to the Editor**

I struggled for some hours to write a response to the invitation, "let us know about what you think is worth doing" but couldn't compose it, not because it is complicated but because it is urgent. I am not accustomed to being so single minded, so gripped by one issue. The titles of the books I've read recently should be sufficient. *Global Fever* by William H. Calvin, 2008, U. of Chicago Press. *The Long Thaw* by

David Archer, 2009 Princeton U. Press. *Eco Barons* by Edward Humes, 2009, 2010 Ecco, Harper Collins. *Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders* edited by JoAnn Carmin and Julian Agyeman, 2011 MIT. *The Vegetarian Imperative* by Anand M. Saxena, 2011 Johns Hopkins U. Press.

The "imperative" in the last title arises from the global fever, the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The diet that best fits the need would be not just vegetarian but organic vegan. But all these books together point to the imperative of political action. The time for "Cap and Trade" programs to be effective, the time for "Carbon Tax" to help is running out. Soon extreme restrictions on extraction of coal, oil and natural gas will be needed to slow global progress toward massive extinctions, global human famine and disaster.

Relevant talk is needed. I'm still looking for today's Rachel Carson (Silent Spring) and politicians with the zeal of those who wrote the Clean Water Act, The Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act. Where are they?

Dale L. Berry

### **First Unitarian HUManist Group**

**March 13<sup>th</sup>, 7pm**

7pm to 8:30pm

Social Hall, First Unitarian Universalist Church,  
3701 Carlisle Blvd. NE

Open to both Religious and Secular Humanists

Meets the second Tuesday of each month

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### **The Atheists and Freethinkers of New Mexico**

<http://atheists.meetup.com/75>

**Sunday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 9am**

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice,  
202 Harvard SE

**Tuesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm**

Social Meeting at 6:30pm at Mimi's Cafe, 4316  
The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25